

NATO pledges to “ramp up” defense production for “grinding war of attrition”

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NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said Tuesday that NATO is in a “race of logistics” against Russia as the war in Ukraine becomes a “grinding war of attrition.”

With the one-year anniversary of the war rapidly approaching, NATO and its members are pledging to increase their ammunition production as the war rapidly accelerates in scale and lethality. Russian forces are reportedly on the verge of a significant victory in the city of Bakhmut, amid warnings by the *Financial Times* that Russia is preparing to increase its use of helicopters, fighters and bombers, which it has up to this point held back.

Speaking at a meeting of NATO defense ministers in Brussels Tuesday, Stoltenberg declared, “The war in Ukraine is consuming an enormous amount of munitions and depleting Allied stockpiles. The current rate of Ukraine’s ammunition expenditure is many times higher than our current rate of production. This puts our defense industries under strain. So we need to ramp up production. And invest in our production capacity.

“It is clear that we are in the race of logistics. Key capabilities like ammunition . . . must reach Ukraine before Russia can seize the initiative on the battlefield.

“A war of attrition becomes a battle of logistics,” he said. “Yes, we have a challenge. Yes we have a problem . . . but we have a strategy to tackle that.”

He added, “We need to ensure that Ukraine gets the weapons it needs to be able to retake territory, liberate the lands and win this war.”

Stoltenberg continued, “The industry can increase production by having more shifts, by using existing production facilities more. But really to have a significant increase, they need to invest and build new plants.”

He reiterated, “You can even work during weekends.”

Last month, the Pentagon announced that it plans to increase ammunition production by 500 percent, to levels last seen during the Korean War. The National Defense Authorization Act passed last year gave the military wartime procurement powers, allowing the Pentagon to carry out no-bid contracts, nominally in the name of increasing production.

Given Stoltenberg’s declaration that NATO is in a “race of logistics” with Russia, AP reporter Lorne Cook asked Stoltenberg a blunt question:

Over the last year, NATO has gone from providing non-lethal assistance from Allies to providing artillery, to tanks. Now we're talking about jet aircraft. The Ukraine contact group is meeting in NATO headquarters. Why should the public believe that NATO is not at war with Russia?

To this, Stoltenberg replied, absurdly:

Neither NATO nor NATO Allies are party to the conflict. What we do as NATO Allies and NATO is to provide support to Ukraine. Ukraine is defending itself, we need to understand what this is.

But Stoltenberg’s own reply made clear the degree to which NATO’s arming of Ukraine has helped create the conditions for the present war. Stoltenberg said,

“The war didn’t start in February last year. The war started in 2014. And since 2014, NATO Allies have provided support to Ukraine, with training, with equipment, so the Ukrainian Armed Forces were much stronger in 2022 than they were in 2020 and 2014.”

In a press conference following the meeting of the Ukraine Contact Group, US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin pointed to the massive buildup of NATO weaponry in Ukraine:

Among the members of this Contact Group, we have given Ukraine’s defenders more than eight combat brigades. This includes major contributions from the United States of Strykers and Bradleys and Abrams tanks. It includes the UK’s donation of Challenger tanks and the contribution of Senator Armored Personnel Carriers that Canada announced last month.

He added, “Eleven countries have pledged tanks. Twenty-two have pledged infantry-fighting vehicles. Sixteen pledged artillery and munitions. And nine more pledged air defense artillery.”

Even as NATO plans to massively increase its involvement in the conflict, the US media is pointing to increasingly worried briefings being received by US officials and lawmakers. In an article published Monday, the *Washington Post* wrote:

U.S. intelligence officials have concluded, however, that retaking the heavily fortified [Crimean] peninsula is beyond the capability of Ukraine’s army right now, according to officials familiar with the matter, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive issues. That sobering assessment has been reiterated to multiple committees on Capitol Hill over the last several weeks.

estimate that Russia currently has over 300,000 forces in Ukraine, up from 150,000 initially, with plans to add hundreds of thousands more. The Russian campaign in the spring could see forces pouring over the Belarusian border and cutting off supply lines in western Ukraine that Kyiv has used to bolster its military.

Whatever the setbacks suffered by the Ukrainian military, NATO has staked its entire international prestige and credibility on the war against Russia. Just last month, US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Mark Milley announced the commitment of the United States and NATO to “go on the offensive to liberate Russian-occupied Ukraine.” He repeated that Ukraine would use NATO armored vehicles and tanks to go on the “tactical and operational offensive to liberate the occupied areas.”

The contrast between the increasingly dire state of the Ukrainian military operation in Ukraine and the sweeping goals made by US and NATO officials sets the stage for a further escalation of US-NATO involvement in the conflict, of which the actions already taken would be just a down payment.



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The article continued:

Western and Ukrainian intelligence officials